

What foods are genetically modified? Are they [safe](#)? Here are the basics:

**Q:How can I tell if foods in the grocery store have genetically modified ingredients?**

**A:** Usually you can't be certain. However, some makers of organic foods label their products as being free of genetically modified ingredients.

**Q:What foods are most likely to have genetically modified ingredients?**

**A:** Cooking oils — mostly corn and soy — and boxed, bagged and other processed foods, such as cereals and snacks, probably have some GM ingredients. That's because they usually contain high-fructose corn syrup or other corn or soy products.

Free from genetic engineering: uncooked, unprocessed meats and fish, and fresh fruits and vegetables, with the exception of Rainbow brand papaya and some squash. Ditto for dairy products, except processed cheeses.

**Q:Are there any health risks from genetically modified foods?**

**A:** Proponents of GM foods say there have been no reports of those foods making people sick. But some health, environmental and consumer groups urging government regulation and [labeling](#) of these foods say gene-swapping can introduce allergens or toxins. They say there is no system to monitor such illnesses.

**Q:What are the benefits of genetically modified crops?**

**A:** So far, there aren't any benefits to consumers in terms of better-tasting, more nutritious or cheaper foods, although researchers say that could come within several years. Most GM changes to corn and soybeans have allowed farmers to cut down on chemicals used to kill weeds and pests, boosting crop yields and cutting costs and potential harm to the environment.

**Q: Why are Europeans and others more suspicious than Americans when it comes to GM foods?**

**A:** Europeans lost [trust](#) in their governments over the meat supply. First they were told repeatedly that they were not at risk from the human form of mad cow disease. Then, concerns were reignited in 1999 when the European Commission said dangerous levels of cancer-causing dioxin were widespread in meat from animals raised on farms near industrial polluters.

**Q:How long have GM processed foods been available in the United States?**

**A:** The first product, the now-defunct Flavr Savr tomato, was sold from 1994-97. Processed foods containing GM corn and soy ingredients began appearing late in the 1995 growing season.

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